W. V-H.

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

This was the bravest warrior
That ever buckled sword;
This, the most gifted poet
That ever breathed a word;
And never earth's philosopher
Traced with his golden pen
On the deathless page, truths half so sage
As he wrote down for men.

And had he not high honor—
The hillside for a pall,
To lie in state, while angels wait
With stars for tapers tall,
And the dark rock-pines like tossing plumes—
Over his bier to wave,
And God's own hand, in that lonely land,
To lay him in the grave?

From "THE BURIAL OF MOSES,"
by Cecil Frances Alexander.

DR. WELLER VAN HOOK
As Chief Executive of the Theosophical Society of America

WELLER VAN HOOK

1862-1933

WELLER VAN HOOK was born in Greenville, Indiana, May 14, 1862. In his home the rigid Dutch principles and discipline played a part in developing that stolid and persistent aggressiveness that carried him through many difficulties and to many achievements. At his mother's knee early in life, he learned to love the bible and to have a wholesome respect for things sacred. In his early professional life, however, he severed his connections with the non-conformist

church in which he had been reared, declaring that until he found a better his profession would be religion enough for him.

His father, a physician, brought him up in an atmosphere of medicine. He took his training at the University of Michigan, and in the year 1885 he was graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Chicago, where he took up his practice after serving the required period as interne in the Cook County Hospital.

He was a member of the Illinois Medical Association and the Illinois State Medical So-

ciety and was formerly professor of surgery at Northwestern University.

Early in his practice he was lured to the clinics of Europe. He studied surgery in Berlin, Paris, London and Vienna.

These studies together with his ability to grasp the universal principles back of the science of Medicine and surgery brought him into prominence. His fellow surgeons honored him as a genius who helped lay the foundation of scientific surgery, and students from all over the world flocked to his clinics. Humanity demanded his services and he gave of himself freely.

At the height of his career as a surgeon Theosophy loomed upon the horizon of his life. It was overwhelming. The tremendous force of his genius which had been directed solely into medical science now found another channel. The same aggressive, studious mind of the scientist explored the depths of Theosophy. He resigned his Professorship — and devoted more time to studying and teaching the Divine Wisdom.

The way he was drawn into theosophy and the Theosophical Society is a matter of perennial interest to those who knew him. Mrs. Van Hook, a woman of

rare culture and fine intellect, being of an inquiring mind investigated in turn the many cults attracting attention in the early years of the present century. But Dr. Van Hook would have none of them! "When you have anything worth while, tell me about it and I will listen," was his repeated rejoiner to all overtures along that line. Returning to the house unexpectedly and earlier than usual one summer afternoon, and making his way to his study on the third floor, he halted in the library for a French book. On the table lay a promising volume in a yellow cover so he took it along!

Esoteric Christianity was finished at one sitting!

The following morning Dr. Van Hook announced to Mrs. Van Hook, "If you have any more books like *that* I will read them!"

Dr. C. Jinarajadasa was in Chicago at the time and his conversations with Dr. Van Hook after this incident inspired the tiny gem by Mr. Jinarajadasa "In His Name."

At the Theosophical Convention in Chicago in 1907 Dr. Van Hook was present. He had occasion to rise during the proceedings and his commanding appearance as a man of affairs

attracted attention from all sides.

A committee was appointed to wait upon him and to ask him to run for the office of chief executive of the American Section of the Theosophical Society.

He declined, stating that his profession gave him no time for other executive duties. The committee was insistent, however, assuring him that the work of the T. S. would consume only a narrow strip of the working surface of his desk. In later years ruefully and whimsically he sometimes recalled how that "narrow strip" widened until it pushed his other business off altogether!

He was prevailed upon to accept the nomination and his election followed.

Patiently and hopefully he worked to gather up the tattered ends of the badly shattered American Section, working in inadequate and uncomfortable quarters with limited means.

Using private funds he later built on his own property a printing press wherein work for the Section could be done acceptably and all scraps of paper turned to account in the production of free propaganda material.

He hoped to interest the membership in a parcel of land available on the shores of Lake Michi-

gan in the South Shore district of Chicago for a National Headquarters.

About this time the movement to found "Krotona" in California gained momentum, and money that would have been available for a Section Headquarters was diverted into that project. As there was insufficient money for both undertakings Dr. Van Hook's plans faded away.

In the mean time his professional work had suffered for want of attention and he felt bound to apply himself to it, therefore he asked to be relieved of his office as General Secretary

of the American Section until he could reestablish himself in his profession.

This occurred in 1911.

The Headquarters was promptly moved to Los Angeles and with the establishment of the new "Krotona" there was an immediate exodus among the members to that balmier clime!

Dr. Van Hook made an effort to withdraw from active T. S. work after his resignation in-as-much as the headquarters, the *Messenger*, and all familiar avenues of service had left Chicago; but before very long a contingent of theosophists besought him to start a new lodge at the center

in the Fine Arts Building where he had taught for so many years.

At first he refused, but, finally yielding to their insistence, a lodge was started with about forty charter members. Each member bought his own chair; together they bought back from the Section the familiar platform and desk and finally a name was chosen for the new lodge. Dr. Van Hook wished quite earnestly to call the new organization "Lodge Akbar." The name was suggested to him rather dramatically and he seemed to wish to abide by the suggestion but that was contrary to established procedure so Akbar Lodge it re-

mains.

The Lodge flourished and for awhile it was the largest in the Section—if not in the world; and today "Akbar members," so called, are to be found throughout the world.

At a T. S. Convention in Kansas City, about the year 1922, Dr. Van Hook read a paper in which he informed the delegates there assembled that Karmic difficulties had been so far adjusted that he was again in a position to offer his services to the Theosophical Society. As the ranking Occultist in the American Section it seemed appropriate that he should do this.

No notice, however, was taken of his overtures, so he continued to devote himself especially to Akbar Lodge and its activities.

Among the collateral activities inaugurated by Dr. Van Hook, aside from the Rajput Press above mentioned, was the Karma and Reincarnation Legion. The Legion boasts a nice little headquarters building and property free of debt. The Legion was organized to spread and popularize a knowledge of Karma and Reincarnation. During the life of the founder of the organization an attractive and interesting little magazine devoted to the purposes of the Legion was pub-

lished and enjoyed a large circulation.

The Woman's Protective Legion is another of the activities founded by this man of many interests and limitless sympathies.

Among the books he published are "The Cultural System" and "The Future Way." Material for many volumes of his lectures and writings never reached the public.

He was a student of ancient history, and the book "Voyages" represent the musings of a traveler, written down for the most part, on a pilgrimage in 1913 to shrines and holy spots in Europe

and Asia, on the occasion of his visit to the International Headquarters of the Theosophical Society in India.

Dr. Van Hook's latter days were spent for the most part on his farm; he loved the country and as his last lingering illness overtook him he repaired to that quiet retreat with the broad river winding by. The gently flowing water reflecting the trees that had shaded him and that now cast long shadows to accompany him to his journey's end.

The life story of Weller Van Hook is one of tragedy; shattered hopes and broken dreams.

"The kingdom of heaven must be made to descend to be upon the earth where it may be lived in and be made vantage ground for new advances."

From "THE FUTURE WAY"
By Dr. Weller Van Hook